



Pioneering the Next Generation

School District of Sevastopol

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BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON SCHOOL FUNDING

TESTIMONY

THE SEVASTOPOL SCHOOL DISTRICT STORY

Thank you for the opportunity to present the impact of the current state school funding formula on the students and the community of the Sevastopol School District. Our district is one of the 50-60 in the state that receive minimal or no equalization aid due to high property values per pupil. In our case, we receive no equalization aid which places an unfair burden upon our tax payers. Because tourism is a major driver of our economy, many of our residents are dependent upon jobs that are seasonal, generally low paying, and often without benefits. Over 37% of our students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. About 86% of our revenue is derived from local sources and less than 4% from state sources.

Beginning in 2008-2009, it was necessary for our district to raise operational funding through the referendum process. To date, we have had to raise \$12,250,000 by passing referenda. We have been fortunate that our tax payers are strongly supportive of education. However, how many times can we "go back to the well." Community members often question why we do not receive state funding as they hear about what other districts are getting. The current funding formula with all of its complexities is difficult to explain to a lay person.

Currently, the Sevastopol community is engaged in a process to identify and confirm needs and explore potential solutions to our facility and site needs. The current facility includes a large section that was built in 1924 with additions in 1946, 1965, 1991, 1996, and 1998. Needless to say, education has changed greatly since 1924 and even since 1998. Our work group has identified a plethora of needs ranging from outdated technology and science facilities to a lack of handicapped accessibility, to infrastructure concerns. The cost of providing a physical plant needed to prepare our students to be college, career, and community ready ranges for \$30 - \$50 million dollars. This cost would need to be assumed by our local tax payers in addition to ongoing operational needs.

In 2010-11, Sevastopol received \$67,648 in special adjustment aid. In 2017-18, that amount is \$22,914 which is a 66.1% decrease. If the funding formula were to include a \$1,000 per pupil minimum aid increase, Sevastopol would receive approximately \$534,949 which would greatly enhance our operational budget.

While our per pupil revenue limit has seen only minimal increases—from \$10,436.85 in 2012-2013 to \$10,662.82 in 2017-2018, our costs have increased significantly. For example, in 2012-2013, our special education costs were \$923,033.50 and rose to \$1,318,248.44 in 2016-2017. Our English Learner costs rose from \$66,078.95 in 2012-2013 to \$77,000.31 in 2016-2017. Other increasing costs include staff salaries in order to remain competitive in the current market, administrative costs due to Educator Effectiveness requirements, and, of course, ever changing technology needs.

What changes in the current funding of Wisconsin schools would be helpful to districts like Sevastopol?

- Assurance of per pupil minimum aid of \$1,000. According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, had the proposal been in effect for the 2016-2017 school year, 52 high property value school districts would have received \$24.7 million, which is just 0.6% of the total net general aid payments of \$4.469 billion.
- Continuation of the current increased sparsity aid component.
- Categorical funding for technology needs to insure that the district and all students have the necessary access.
- Increased funding for special education services.
- Categorical aid for facilities upgrades.
- Continuation of the pupil adjustment aid to provide additional needed resources to all districts.

In addition, all districts would benefit from a funding formula that is easy for the lay person to understand.

We appreciate the great challenge that you as members of this Commission have, and we thank you for undertaking this work. Please know that if you need additional information from us, we would be very willing to assist in whatever way possible.

Thank you.

Presented by Sue Todey
Sevastopol Board of Education
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